

book. The *Lives of the Poets* supplement Boswell.

They are immortal for their combination of biography and autobiography; for their wit; and for their style.

Johnson lives in confined quarters; but within their limits he is the most charming of hosts. Therefore, of all the critics of his age, with all his errors he alone is frequented still.

Of course, this idea of criticism as a by-way of literature—an art, though an applied art, rather than a science—is nothing new. Johnson conformed to it in practice,

despite his principles; Sainte-Beuve with open eyes, though with discretion: 'Pour nous, en effet, faut-il le trahir?—ce cadre ou la critique, au sens exact du mot, n'intervient souvent que comme fort secondaire, n'est dans ce cas-la qu'une forme particuliere et accommodee

aux alentours, pour produire nos propres sentiments sur le monde et sur la vie, pour exhaler avec detour une certaine poesie cachee/ Thus the disappointed author of *Volupte* and Joseph Delorme consoled himself by becoming the disguised novelist and poet of the *Lundis*.

Are they the less great criticism for that? And after Sainte-Beuve, Anatole France in his turn yet more boldly

avowed and defended the idea of the critic as autobiographer. But old as this view now is, it remains less familiar than the still older vision of the critic as a judge sitting, majestically periwigged, on the bench, not as a

witness in the box. 'Judge', after all, is the original meaning of the word 'critic', and it may be argued that it is the business of a judge, not to give pleasure, but to administer justice. The Aristodes, the Scaligers, the Denises, the Lockharts of criticism have all made general truth their object, and some of them utility also; it was their self-appointed task to discover the laws of literature and, usually, to see that these were kept. They do not lack would-be successors today.